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Reagan's Traveling Spy Story



The New York Times / Teresa Zabala

President Reagan regaling William J. Casey, Director of Central Intelligence, with a spy joke.

President Reagan in remarks at a bill-signing ceremony at the Central Intelligence Agency, Langley, Va. White House transcript. June 23, 1982.

The story is that there was an agent overseas and happened to be in Ireland and there was an emergency and it was necessary to contact him immediately. So they called in another agent and they said, "Now, you'll go there. His name is Murphy and your recognition will be to say, 'Tis a fair day but it'll be lovelier this evening.'"

So he went to Ireland and — a little town in Ireland, into the pub, elbowed himself up to the bar, ordered a

drink and then said to the bartender, "How would I get in touch with Murphy?"

And the bartender says, "Well, if it's Murphy the farmer you want, it's two miles down the road and it's the farm on the left." He said, "If it's Murphy the bootmaker, he's on the second floor of the building across the street. And," he says, "my name is Murphy."

So he picked up the drink and he said, "Well, 'tis a fair day, but it'll be lovelier this evening."

"Oh," he said, "it's Murphy the spy you want."